

PASTORAL PERSPECTIVE

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

# Memories of Christmas of 1977

It is Christmas night and I am thoroughly enjoying a few quiet moments to reflect on what has happened to me in the days of preparation for and celebration of the Birthday of Christ. I try each Christmas season to visit those who because of sickness or age or confinement may feel depressed or isolated. The holidays tend to accentuate our joys and our sorrows.



My first visit was to the Auburn Correctional Facility. I have gone there for the last two years and intend to continue as long as I am the Bishop of Rochester. I have been impressed with the quality of worship that these men offer and the serious way in which they celebrate the liturgy. Father Gardner has provided great pastoral care for his flock and years ago a group of the Legion of Mary from Rochester helped to organize the Legion in the facility. So, we do have a parish, a vital community of faith within the walls of Auburn. The Church which continues the life of Christ who was born in circumstances of neglect and who was rebuffed by society has been reminded by Him, "I was in prison and you came to visit me." It is not merely a question of visiting the imprisoned but of offering help to them to be rehabilitated in a facility which will be closer to their community, their families and friends who provide the support they need to reform their lives. Our Diocese is committed through the Judicial Process Commission and the Office of Human Development to continued engagement in prison reform — a need recognized by Governor Carey and Commissioner Ward.

My next visit has been an annual one for the past eight years. On December 18, I went to the Monroe Community Hospital for a Christmas liturgy. Again the

visit was an inspiration to me. Father Bruce Ammering is a good shepherd who knows his people and is able to call them by name. He has worked with the Reverend Gerald Wunrow to create a community of service within the hospital. Through baked food sales and the collection of money they are providing a Christmas dinner to poor people in the community. Hospital patients went out — to buy the food and in wheelchair mobiles they delivered the food packages to needy families. This is typical of their spirit. Often we tend to define them as helpless and dependent and forget the riches they bring to our community. In the hospital Holy Communion is distributed by patients in wheelchairs to those who are bedridden. It is this kind of self-healing community which the Church tries to promote. Residents at this hospital are represented on the Diocesan Pastoral Council and the Diocesan Commission on Aging. These people who understand what a physical handicap means can best tell us how the needs of the handicapped can be met in our society.

The next day I visited Cedarwood Towers on East Main Street — an apartment complex for the elderly. I have a dear aunt and uncle living here. I celebrated a Christmas liturgy. Each week the priests and Sisters of St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street provide this great spiritual comfort for the residents. Here, too, I found a caring and loving community filled with deep gratitude for my visit. I trust that our Commission on Aging will give us good direction in finding ways to meet the needs of the elderly. Over 80% of our population who are over 65 are fully mobile and independent. We have to remind them of their dignity and of their usefulness and help them organize to defend their rights against a society that continues to preach for early retirement. The wisdom of their years of experience can benefit all of us. I have always maintained that age does not depend on chronology but an attitude of mind. I hope I can

always stay as young as the beautiful people I met at Cedarwood Towers.

Christmas Eve found me at the Cathedral to celebrate the Family Mass at 5:00 p.m. In every parish of the diocese this has grown to be the most popular of the Christmas liturgies. I began at 4:30 p.m. to trim the Christmas tree with ornaments made by the children who came one by one to offer their creative gift to honor the Christ Child. It is a hazardous half-hour which even the Lloyds of London would hesitate to insure. Yet it is wonderful to see the excitement in the eyes of the youngsters. The liturgy begins with a procession to the Crib — with a family from the parish carrying the statue of the Infant. After the blessing of the Crib, the Mass begins. I read a child's story of the Birth of Christ based on the traditional Gospel of St. Luke. Then I invited the youngsters to gather around me to ask them questions about the true meaning of Christmas. Their answers are spontaneous and offer some good insights. I concluded with a message to the adults and prayed that Christmas bring to new life the little child in each of us.

The journey ended on Christmas Day with a televised Mass for the shut-ins and with a Mass at St. Ann's Home. Again, I find that this beautiful community of 'thank you' people, loving and caring for each other and prayerfully supporting their bishop, has given me a gift beyond all measure — a Christmas never to be forgotten.

In the quiet of this Christmas night I read Pope Paul's message for the celebration of January 1, 1978 — the Day of Peace. His theme this year is "No to Violence; Yes to Peace." I prayed with him that the angelic message of the first Christmas resound in our hearts in this New Year of the Lord "Peace on earth to those on whom God's favour rests." May it rest with us this year and always.

## Primacy of Spiritual Values in Justice Quest

Following is a talk given by Pope Paul VI to members of the Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace during a meeting in December.

We are very happy to receive this morning our Commission Justice and Peace on the occasion of the first general Assembly it has held since it received its definitive statutes. First of all we turn affectionately towards the new members of this Commission: men and women of different professions and from different backgrounds, you represent here all the continents with their cares and their aspirations. We also greet our brothers in the episcopate who are among you, the representatives of the various curial departments, and finally those in charge of the commission, dear Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, your president, and his collaborators.



In this brief talk, we would like not only to express to you our satisfaction at seeing you gathered around us and to tell you also how much we rely on you, but also to draw your attention to some essential points of your activity, in order to throw light on the meaning of the mission we have entrusted to you by calling you to be members of this Commission.

The first point concerns the very nature of your task, such as the *Motu Proprio* *Justitiam et Pacem* defined it. We know that this document has been at the center of your reflections and that you have already meditated on the originality of the responsibilities you have received. There is no lack, thank God, of organisms which have set themselves the purpose of studying problems connected with justice in the different juridical, economic, political or social fields, and with action in its favour. But the commission that you form is distinguished essentially from them. On determining its definitive structures, in

fact, we indicated clearly that we intended to establish, within the Roman Curia, an organism dedicated to a precise and clearly defined ecclesial service, which is to study the problems of justice and peace with a view to action; but in a pastoral perspective of evangelization.

It is here, dear friends, that your concrete and varied experience is essential. You must put your knowledge of the present-day world and its needs in the service of the Holy See and of the universal Church. It is here, too, that it becomes clear how justified are the directives of the *Motu Proprio* which assign you the members of the episcopate, in each country, as first and privileged interlocutors. On the one hand, they are the best qualified to express to you the aspirations they perceive in the people entrusted to them, and they are also, as the persons responsible for evangelization, the ones that have prior claim to information and help in the accomplishment of their mission in relation to the fields of your competence.

Immense perspectives are opening up before you for this task of study and animation. The commission has already set to work on it. We wish merely to stress in your presence, and this will be our second point, the section of the *Motu Proprio* concerning the social thought of the Church. There are numerous texts of the magisterium on the subject, and they are not always well enough known, used and emphasized.

Social problems, furthermore, evolve, even within industrial societies; their meaning changes and new ones appear, on the plane of national communities as in relations between nations. Christians cannot stop at the pursuit of a more just economic order to be established, but, grasping aspirations to new relationships between persons and between peoples, they must show that these relations cannot be based except on a new hierarchy of values and, in a word, on the primacy of the spiritual.

It falls upon you to act like the master of the house

in the Gospel parable who draws from his treasure old values and new ones. The principles of the social doctrine of the Church are always valid, but, to be understood and to be effective, they must find new expressions adapted to the facts of our time and its needs.

Many other connected areas of reflection and activity are offered to you, which we cannot recall here, on questions of human rights and the obligations derived from them, of violence which undermines the foundations of society, and of religious freedom which is not sufficiently guaranteed everywhere.

It is, therefore, an important task that awaits you. It will not escape any of you that such an ecclesial service calls for particular orientations. We do not hesitate to say to you that they are spiritual in the first place. You will certainly have to increase further your competence in your own fields and perfect your knowledge of present-day problems, but you will also have to deepen your knowledge of the doctrine of the Church and of evangelical requirements, and above all you will have to develop your sense of prayer and of *sentire cum Ecclesia* in order to form the really Catholic and pastoral mentality necessary for your task. It will enable you to reach that broadness of outlook that we wish for you, so that, in every field, your efforts will not be isolated, carried out abstractly, so to speak, but will find their place — like yourselves in our Curia, so different and so united at the same time — in the one concern of the Church, which is to ensure every man his dignity in this world and to open the Kingdom of God to him.

We know with what readiness and generosity you have already responded to our appeal. We tell you how grateful we are for this. And above all we ask the Lord, the Author of all good, to cause your efforts to bear fruit and to grant you the love of the Church and of faithfulness indispensable for those who wish to put themselves at its service. In his name, we willingly give you the Apostolic Blessing.